

# IF CHRIST HAD NOT BEEN RAISED . . .

READING: John 20:1-10

Easter 2016

Sermon No. 413

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# There is so much to talk about at Easter

- Betrayal of Judas
- Denial of Peter
- People's anger
- Pilate's dilemma
- Disciple's crisis
- Thomas's doubt

But we cannot go past the fact that Jesus . . .

- Gave Himself for me
- Took my punishment on the Cross
- Died in my place
- He substituted Himself
- He rose again

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

<sup>3</sup>For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve

## If Christ had not been raised from the dead . . .

1 Peter 1:3

<sup>3</sup> Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Revelation 20:6

<sup>6</sup>Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

The resurrection of CHRIST is foundational . . . as it was for the disciples!

- Although for them, it would take a little time to fully sink in

# We have to stop and think . . . for the disciples

After Jesus' body was laid in the Tomb they were crushed

- They retreated into the city
- Their hope is gone
- They have no leader
- They huddled together in secret, hoping to avoid arrest
- They mourn . . . they grieve

Until . . . Mary Magdalene arrived early Sunday morning

NKJV 20:2 . . . They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him!"

Peter & John ran to see . . . sure enough the Tomb was empty

THE VOICE 8 After Peter pointed this out, the other disciple (who had arrived long before Peter) also entered the tomb; and based on what he saw, faith began to well up inside him! 9 Before this moment, none of them understood the Scriptures and why He must be raised from the dead. 10 Then they all went to their homes.

- But one person remained!

## John 20:11-18 – Mary Magdalene

<sup>11</sup> But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. <sup>12</sup> And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. <sup>13</sup> Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." <sup>14</sup> Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher).

Now over next 24 hours, Jesus would appear to . . .

- The two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32; Mark 16:12-13)
- To Peter in Jerusalem (Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5)
- To His disciples and other followers in a locked room in Jerusalem (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-23)

But for now, Jesus appears to Mary

- There is something to be said for one who searches earnestly for CHRIST!
- One would think Jesus would appear to Peter first . . . or maybe John
- Jesus accepts you for you are – not for what you are!
- She becomes the first person to see the resurrected CHRIST . . . her instinct is to reach out to Him

<sup>17</sup> Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"

Jesus: <sup>17</sup> Mary, you cannot hold Me. I must rise above this world to be with My Father, who is also your Father; My God, who is also your God. Go tell this to all My brothers

<sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* He had spoken these things to her

That is . . . I have seen the Lord!

Her hope is back! Her faith in GOD is restored!

# We need to recognize the resurrection . . . because the risen CHRIST is our HOPE

Perhaps Paul reflected on these truths when he wrote the churches

- He wrote frequently about CHRIST's death – that our redemption is through the blood of CHRIST
- He also wrote frequently about the resurrection – for without the resurrection things would be in a shambles

## 1 Corinthians 15:12-28

NKJV <sup>12</sup> Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup> But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. <sup>14</sup> And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. <sup>15</sup> Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. <sup>16</sup> For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! <sup>18</sup> Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup> If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

- Powerful message . . . Paul says, IF CHRIST DID NOT RISE FROM THE DEAD . . .
  1. His preaching would be for nothing [empty]
  2. The people's faith in the message he brought to them is worthless
  3. Paul and the apostles would all be guilty of misrepresenting GOD
  4. All of his listeners would be doomed in their sins

5. And all of those who had died trusting in Jesus, they are just decaying in the ground

6. We are (altogether) foolish

THE VOICE <sup>19</sup> If what we have hoped for in the Anointed doesn't take us beyond this life, then we are world-class fools, deserving everyone's pity

## But thank GOD this isn't how it is!

<sup>20</sup> But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

NLT <sup>20</sup> But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. <sup>21</sup> So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man.

## That means what we saw in negative terms can be seen in positive terms . . .

1. Our preaching is not in vain . . . the GOSPEL of CHRIST is GOD's powerful message of redemption, hope, and love
2. Our faith in that message isn't a waste of time . . . it is real, and powerful and life-changing

We long to have someone we can count on through thick and thin

- Someone who is absolutely trustworthy
- Someone who, if you put your faith in Him, it won't be in vain
- Someone who won't let you down
- Someone who will always be there

And there is someone you can count on. Someone absolutely trustworthy. Someone who will never let you down. Jesus is alive to be trusted. "The life I live I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20)

3. We are not misrepresenting GOD . . . we are testifying of the truth concerning HIM

4. We are not doomed in our sins . . . in fact our sins are forgiven

That is amazing . . . GOD would be entitled to hold our sins against us—and we all have sinned—but that would mean there is no hope in GOD

- The greatest blessing is that GOD doesn't hold our sins against us
- Everything moving forward . . . HANGS on HIS FORGIVENESS
- The resurrection is connected to our forgiveness
- By His Death He paid the penalty for our sins and purchased our acquittal, our justification, our forgiveness
- GOD raised Jesus from the dead to validate our forgiveness and to vindicate his Son's righteousness
- The resurrection is a celebration of the work of justification

5. Those who have died trusting in Jesus don't just decay . . . they have gone home already to be with the LORD!

6. We are not 'world-class' fools . . . in fact we may have to evaluate who the real fools are!

Instead of saying negatively that we are foolish, we can say positively that because of the resurrection we are to be envied!

- Our faith in Christ, is full, meaningful, valid, valuable, significant

Because He is risen and alive and reigns as king forever, all our obedience, all our love, all our self-denial is not to-be-pitied, but is positively enviable

2 Corinthians 4:17

This slight momentary affliction is working for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison

We don't want to come to the end of our days and say it was all pointless

Paul knows this. That's why he ends this whole chapter on the resurrection (v. 58) with the words: "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

Christ is risen and everything done in his name—by his strength and for his glory—is not in vain. It is enviable. Significant. Valuable. Eternal.

## The greatest news of all . . . those who have 'fallen asleep' are alive

Instead of saying negatively that we all die . . . we can say positively that we shall live forever in joy

- We will not only live forever
- We will live the way Christ lives



# GOD is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Christ

In raising him from the dead

- He gave us forgiveness and glorified Jesus as the all-sufficient forgiver;
- He gave us a friend to count on and glorified Jesus as utterly reliable;
- He gave us guidance and unchanging truth and glorified Jesus as the absolute foundation for truth and righteousness;
- He gave us a life that is worth the living
- It is not foolish – it is enviable and He glorified Jesus as the source and goal of all life and all ministry;
- He gave us everlasting joy that will not be ended by death, and glorified Jesus as the author of life, the victor over death, and the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep

We urge you to lift up your heart and say:  
Worthy is the Lamb that was slain and hath redeemed us to God by His blood to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing